

Underhill Conservation Commission
Minutes
April 28th, 2014
Underhill Town Hall

Present: Trevor Squirrel (chair), Barbara Greene, and Merianne O'Grady

Opening remarks:

Trevor reported that Jim Beebe has resigned from UCC as of this month. However, per Trevor, Jim will still be in charge of next Saturday's Green-Up Day.

Pat Lamphere has joined UCC. (He was on the now-defunct Underhill Trails Committee. Pat also attended our last month's meeting, and expressed interest in becoming a new member of UCC.)

In addition, Karen McKnight, both a previous UCC member and part of the UTC, will be returning to UCC. Since we will be focusing on the issue of trails in Underhill, and she is keenly interested in this issue, it will be helpful to have her knowledge available once again. Nancy and Howard McCrae are also interested in joining us, and although they are currently out of town, they hope to be present at our next meeting.

Crane Brook Trail - update:

Per Trevor, the Underhill Select Board will hold a special meeting on Tuesday, April 29th, to allow for open discussion and review of the current Town of Underhill Trail Ordinance. Input from interested residents has been encouraged, including landowners whose property abuts the Town's Crane Brook Trail. The initial Ordinance was created in 2002, and due to various concerns, there has been interest in revising it. Trevor emphasized that the real focus tomorrow night will be on the Crane Brook Trail, which has been under litigation for at least the last several years. As far as he is aware, no draft of a revision to the current Trails Ordinance yet exists. One of the litigants, David Demarest, whose land directly abuts the Crane Brook Trail, indicated he will be present at the Select Board meeting. The other party in the litigation, Jeffrey Moulton, may or may not be present. Trevor clarified that Mr. Moulton's land is not actually adjacent to the trail. It is hoped that the other involved landowners will also make an appearance and voice their opinions/concerns.

Trevor stated that he feels the Crane Brook Trail needs to be managed, and an effective method of doing so would be to close off access to the trail, at both ends, to motorized vehicles. One option would be to have a locked gate at the

Town Garage end of the Trail, to keep out such traffic, yet provide a sufficient opening to allow hikers access. Boulders would not be as effective as a gate. Perhaps another form of traffic control could be implemented at the other end - boulders might work here. Upon further consideration, Trevor stated that perhaps gates at both ends would be the simplest solution. Although the Town road crew can keep an eye on the end near their garage, the other end would be problematic in terms of monitoring since it is more remote. Gates, therefore would alleviate this concern. For accountability purposes, keys to such gates should be kept at the Town Hall and signed out by authorized parties, such as the abutting landowners who may wish to have accessibility with motorized vehicles for various work-projects on their land. Trevor clarified that both ATVs and heavy motorized equipment, (such as tractors) are not allowed on the trail (unless authorized), yet it was thought that snowmobiles, (which when the ground is covered by snow, do minimal damage to the underlying terrain) might very well be an exception to this regulation in the current Ordinance.

Commission members who were present agreed that clear signage at the entrance and along the Crane Brook Trail is needed in order to (1) delineate what persons and/or modes of transportation (bicycles, snowmobiles, ATV's, heavy equipment, etc.) are allowed to / prohibited from utilizing it and (2) educate users regarding its designation as a town trail and as a sensitive ecosystem. Such a sign could also identify the trail as a part of the Town of Underhill's Crane Brook Conservation District.

Green-Up Day (Saturday, May 3rd):

As stated in the Opening Remarks, Jim Beebe will be in charge of this state-wide event for the town of Underhill.

UCC Plant Sale (Saturday, June 7th, 9 a.m.):

Barbara stated that she had not yet placed the order for the blueberry plants. Jim Beebe had offered to check wholesale prices for these plants at the Arcana CSA, but due to his resignation, he is no longer involved. Barbara then wondered if we should still proceed with this before placing the order with the nursery in MI.

Last year, 30 plants each of three different varieties (early-, mid-, and late-season) were ordered. Barbara thought that we sold all 90 plants last year. For this year's sale, Trevor proposed that we increase the quantity to 40 plants of each variety for a total of 120 plants. Barbara agreed. In addition, Trevor suggested that we charge more per plant.

Some individuals like to place a pre-order for the blueberry plants prior to the sale. Barbara indicated that she would rather not have to take this into account

(additional plants based on pre-order amounts) when placing the order.

After some discussion, the members decided that the total order (including all pre-orders) would be 120 plants. It was also agreed that those who wish to pre-order need to pay and pick up their plants PRIOR to the start of the sale at 9 a.m. Individuals can either mail Barbara a check when placing their order or pay upon pick-up.

Unlike last year, we do not have to plan shipping from the nursery around the Memorial Day holiday. It was agreed that the plants should arrive in Underhill by the Thursday prior to the sale.

To advertise the sale on June 7th at the town hall site, Trevor thought we should make a generic sign out of foam-board, so that only the date needed changing and the sign could be utilized from year to year. Trevor has the capacity to print large posters (2' x 3' or 3' x 4') for this sign.

Since the gentleman who ran the sale last year (the auctioneer) is not available, Trevor offered to take on this job.

Barbara clarified that the MI nursery bills the Town of Underhill. Therefore, because the town is considered a wholesaler, there would be no tax added on to the price of the plants.

As was done in previous years, the sale will be held either 'rain or shine'.

Invasive Plants Education/Outreach Project (Saturday, June 7th, after the Plant Sale):

As discussed at the April UCC meeting, this activity will commence around 10:00 a.m. and last approximately 1 1/2 hours. It will be held at Moore Park which is directly across the street from the Town Hall. As with the Sale, this is a 'rain or shine' event.

Trevor contacted the Nature Conservancy earlier in the day, and was waiting for a return call regarding a possible workshop leader/invasive species expert. In addition, he sent out e-mails to other organizations re: this need. Barbara suggested that perhaps someone from UVM might be possible. Merianne spoke to Dr. Leonard Perry @ UVM, and he also suggested contacting the Nature Conservancy. It was decided that UCC will discuss options at the next meeting.

New Business:

New UCC member Pat Lamphere contacted Trevor regarding an upcoming workshop on local insect pests (such as the longhorn beetle) which he heard about on WCIX-TV recently. Reportedly, it will be held in Essex in May.

Adjournment:

No other new business was presented, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Next Meeting:

Monday, May 12, 2014, 6:30 p.m., Underhill Town Hall

Respectfully submitted, Merianne O'Grady, UCC member

4/6/2014 **DRAFT**

Finch
T. J. H. 5/12/2014